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ABSTRACT

The "Blueprint" is a common framework of career development competencies that students and adults anywhere in Canada or the United States need to master in order to be successful and self-reliant in planning and managing their careers in a rapidly changing, knowledge-age labor market. A practical resource designed for career professionals, the Blueprint emerged from a partnership project of Canada's National Life/Work Centre, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Canada Career Information Partnership. It is based on work done by the U. S. National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee to develop the "National Career Development Guidelines K-Adult Handbook." These guidelines have been undergoing development, implementation, evaluation, and enhancement since 1988. Most U. S. states have adopted and implemented these guidelines. The Blueprint is an adaptation of these guidelines for Canada. This paper describes the 550-page publication. (EV/MKA)

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The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs

Phil Jarvis and Joan Richardt

Career development is about growing through life and work; about learning, experiencing, living, working and changing; about creating and discovering pathways through one's life and work. When intentional, career development is about actively creating the life one wants to live and the work one wants to do. When unintentional, career development occurs anyway - none of us can avoid learning, experiencing, living, working and changing! The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs will help make career development intentional for more people.
- Introduction to the Blueprint

A Common Framework for Career Practice

As a career practitioner, have you ever looked for a resource that would help you clearly determine if your work with students and/or clients was resulting in the learning outcomes that you desired? Could you use a resource that would help you plan new career programs that meet the needs of your students and your community? Do you need an evaluation tool that will help you review an existing career program or curriculum? Would you like a resource that assists in determining what career development competencies a particular career resource targets? The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* provides tools to address these issues and many more.

The Blueprint has been adopted as a common framework of career development competencies that students and adults - anywhere in Canada or the United States - need to master to be successful and self-reliant in planning and managing their careers in the rapidly changing knowledge-age labour markets of the 21st century. With emerging interest internationally, it now appears that this competency framework may be applicable, with appropriate adaptations, for citizens of the new global economy in other countries as well.

A practical resource designed for career development professionals, educators, trainers, researchers, and human resource professionals, the Blueprint emerged from a partnership project of Canada's National Life/Work Centre, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Canada Career Information Partnership that began in 1997. It is based on the pioneering work done by the U.S. National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) to develop the *National Career Development Guidelines K-Adult Handbook*. These Guidelines have been under development, implementation, evaluation and enhancement since 1988. Most U.S. states have now adopted and implemented the Guidelines. In return for Canada's sharing The Real Game Series with its U.S. partners, NOICC graciously offered the results of its 10-year Guidelines Project. The Blueprint is an adaptation of these Guidelines for Canada.

The Blueprint is available as a 550-page publication (in three-ring binder format) that includes all the information described below. The total publication is also available for viewing and downloading free of charge on the National Life/Work Centre website at http://lifework.ca.

Contents of the Blueprint

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The Blueprint consists of four main components:

1. **The competencies** that Canadians require, from childhood to adult hood, effectively to manage their life/work development. These competencies and their "performance indicators" are at the heart of the Blueprint.

2. **A comprehensive process** for developing and redesigning programs and products that will help Canadians acquire the above competencies in schools, post-secondary institutions, training programs, career centres and other settings in which career development interventions occur.

3. **Appendices** full of information that supports effective career development programming. They include information about needs assessments, skills classification systems, portfolios, practitioner standards and guidelines and many relevant career resources.

4. **A Quick Reference Guide** to help users quickly and efficiently find and use what they need within the Blueprint.

The Life/Work Competencies

The Blueprint outlines 11 key career development competencies and organizes them into three content areas: 1) Personal Management, 2) Learning and Work Exploration, and 3) Life/Work Building. Each of the 11 competencies is also broken down into four levels that suggest the developmental nature of each of the competencies. The levels are: 1) Early Years: Primary/Elementary Schools, 2) Middle Years: Junior High Schools, 3) Senior Years: High Schools, and 4) Post-secondary and Adult Populations. The competencies for each content area and developmental level are given in the table on page **XX [NOTE: Needs to be inserted]**. *This summary table is the core of the Blueprint framework.*

Performance Indicators: The table shows 11 competencies organized by developmental level. The Blueprint also presents *performance indicators* for each of the competencies. The *competencies* relate to the overall goals in life/work development, whereas the *performance indicators* describe the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes learners must master in order to effectively manage their life/work development process. The competencies are described at each level by several performance indicators.

Each of the indicators has been written according to a taxonomy that conveys the developmental nature of the learning process for that particular competency. This taxonomy includes the following four stages:

1. Acquisition: Acquiring knowledge (identify, discover)
2. Application: Experiencing acquired knowledge (explore, demonstrate)
3. Personalization: Integrating acquired and applied knowledge (deepen understanding of, explore the effect of)
4. Actualization: Striving towards full potential (use, express, appreciate)

Both the indicators and taxonomy are explained in detail in both the *Quick Reference Guide* and in the full publication (both in print and on the website). All of the indicators have been written according to this taxonomy.

To clarify how the Content Areas, Competencies, Developmental Levels, and Performance Indicators work together in the Blueprint, here is an example of a specific Performance Indicator:

7.2.8 Identify one's transferable academic and practical skills and experience a new task by using them.

- The first digit in this example refers to the general Competency (7) which states "Secure/Create and Maintain Work." This competency is listed under the general Content Area of "Life/Work Building" (see the table).
- The second digit in this example refers to the Level (2) - Middle Years: Junior High School.
- The third digit refers to the eighth performance indicator for the competency which is at the second stage of the taxonomy – i.e. Application – Experiencing Acquired Knowledge.

Though seemingly complex at first, this coding structure, once mastered, provides a fundamental framework for practitioners to understand the developmental nature of the Blueprint and how it can be practically applied in career development programs.

Local Standards: When the Blueprint is implemented by a local school, institution or organization, planners and practitioners need to establish local standards and specific objectives for each of the performance indicators. This step is necessary to help guage the level of mastery the learners' achieve for each competency.

The standards selected will represent local decisions and circumstances and should state how and to what degree of achievement the individual will demonstrate attainment of the competencies. An example is given in the Blueprint of how a particular indicator can be translated into a local standard:

Competency 5.3: Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information.
Indicator 5.3.1: Explore the educational requirements of various work roles.
Local Standard: Grade Nine students will correctly describe the educational requirements for five work roles of interest to them.

The local standards described above operationalize the general objectives provided by the indicators and offer a local context in which to judge mastery of the competencies. Having local standards greatly enhances and simplifies the process of helping clients identify their competency mastery.

Where to Start: The Quick Reference Guide

At around 550 pages, the Blueprint is a multi-purpose, comprehensive resource loaded with useful information, resources and tools for a variety of educators and professionals. Most practitioners will likely not use all of the resource and will pick the sections that are most relevant to their needs.

The best place to start learning about the Blueprint and how to use it for specific applications is through the *Quick Reference Guide*. The Guide sets out a summary of the Blueprint and offers a strategy for how to apply the Blueprint most effectively in a variety of needs areas. For example, the following needs are given with tips and suggestions about where to go in the Blueprint to find relevant resources and assistance:

- Determine individual client/student competencies and develop plans to address gaps
- Review a product to determine the competencies it targets
- Review an existing specific program or curriculum
- Create a specific program
- Review an existing comprehensive delivery system
- Develop a comprehensive career development system.
- Play a supporting role to those directly involved with career development programming

The Guide can be viewed online at the NLWC website: http://lifework.ca

Who Can Use the Blueprint

This resource can be used by any professional in any organization whose mission it is, directly or indirectly, to help connect youth and adults to their preferred futures. The Blueprint is used in education, training and human resource departments at all levels of government, K-12 schools, post-secondary education and training institutions, career resource centres, employment centres, one-stop/start offices, human resources units in public and private corporations, vocational rehabilitation and workers' compensation settings, community agencies and other diverse other settings.

Making a Difference in Career Practice

The Blueprint is a complex document based on years of focused research and application in both the Unites States and Canada. It allows career practitioners and others to work with a national framework of competencies and proven processes to create comprehensive, effective and measurable life/work development programs and products so all citizens can better plan and manage their lives and work.

The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*:

- Maps out the life/work competencies Canadians need to proactively manage their career building process, from kindergarten to adulthood;
- Provides administrators and practitioners with a systematic process of developing, implementing, evaluating and marketing career development programs or redesigning and enhancing existing programs;
- Enables career resource developers to design products, programs and services to address specific competencies, and to explain to those who make purchase decisions the competencies targeted by resources;
- Enables career resource purchasers and users to identify resources that align with high priority competencies identified through their own needs assessments;
- Enables researchers to determine the extent to which clients/students have acquired competencies addressed by program and product interventions;
- Provides a common language across Canada for the outcomes of career development initiatives, at all developmental stages, enabling people moving from one educational institution or agency to another to have their needs addressed seamlessly and with high service quality.
- Contains appendices that help users find sample resources, cross-reference the Blueprint competencies with other prominent skills and competency frameworks (such as those addressing employability, essential and emotional skills, learn about portfolios, identify relevant career resources, and more.

Having a national list of life/work competencies and indicators helps Canadian service providers achieve a number of aims:

- Clarity of outcomes: The Blueprint's framework enables practitioners (and their funders) to be clear about, and measure the outcomes they are achieving.
- Service consistency: A common language within and between services and products helps Canadians know what they need, and get what they need, as they move from one service or product, agency or organization, or geographic region, to another.
- Efficiency: A common language for life/work competencies helps clients and practitioners more efficiently review, compare and select programs and products.
- Reduced ambiguity: Assumptions abound regarding the meanings of terms such as career planning or self-awareness. Spelling out these assumptions for all to review enhances clarity and effectiveness of communication significantly.
- Improved human resource practices within organizations: The Blueprint offers organizations a common language by which they can discuss employee development. This language will result in human resource practices becoming more coherent, focussed and directed form a career development perspective.
- Infusion of career development into school programs. The Blueprint will enable educators to validate the career development competencies they already teach in subjects such as English, art and social studies, and enable them to infuse career development further into day-to-day teaching.
- National transferability across curricula. The Blueprint enables educators to identify and enhance the transferability of career development curricula across the country.

• Career development culture: Having a common structure by which to discuss career development issues and aims helps all Canadians become more conscious of career development and life/work issues.

Implementing the Blueprint

The Blueprint development and implementation partners in Canada include the National Life/Work Centre (Executing Agency), Human Resources Development Canada and the Canada Career Information partnership (CCIP) network. Through CCIP, Blueprint Coordinators (current list available on the website at http://lifework.ca) are in place in every province and territory, in departments of education, training, labour and human resources in all provinces and territories.

In addition, all major national career and labour market information and career development foundations, associations and interest groups are active Blueprint partners. Pilots and demonstrations across Canada in 1998 and 1999 resulted in suggestions for revisions and enhancements. During this process, the Blueprint was well-received and seen as a sorely-needed resource by public and private sector and NGO participants.

The Blueprint is currently being implemented on a voluntary basis by government agencies, professional associations, community agencies and corporations in every province and territory in Canada. Training for those interested in learning more about the Blueprint, or wishing to proceed with implementation, is available through provincial and territorial Blueprint Coordinators.

For More Information or To Obtain a Copy of the Blueprint:
Contact the National Life/Work Centre (NLWC), Memramcook Institute, 488 Centrale Street, Memramcook, New Brunswick, Canada E4K 3S6. Toll-free: 1-888-533-5683. Tel: (506) 758-0388. Fax: (506) 758-0358. E-mail: lifework@nbnet.nb.ca. The Blueprint is also available in PDF format at the NLWC website: http://lifework.ca

For More Information About the U.S. National Career Development Guidelines:
Contact the NOICC Training Support Center (NTSC) Center for Learning Connections, Highline Community College, PO Box 90000, Des Moines, Washington, USA 98-98-9800. Toll-free: 1-888-700-8940. Tel: (206) 870-4860 Fax: (206) 8970-3787. Email: ntsc@hcc.ctc.edu. Website: http://www.learningconnections.org/ntsc.htm